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Industrial Disputes, Australia

The number of disputes (strikes or lockouts), employees involved and working days lost; cause of dispute; duration; and the reason work resumed

Reference period March 2021

Released 3/06/2021

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Key statistics

In the March quarter 2021

- 24 disputes occurred.
- 2,700 employees were involved and 19,200 working days lost.
- disputes occurred in 6 industries and in 6 states and territories.

During the year ended March 2021, there were 79 disputes and a total of 48,800 working days lost.

	Quarter		Year ended	
	December 2020	March 2021	March 2020	March 2021
Number of disputes				
Commenced in period (no.)	27	22	120	76
Total (no.)	32	24	130	79
Employees involved				
Newly involved ('000)	2.2	2.3	46.7	9.6
Total ('000)	2.6	2.7	48.3	9.8
Working days lost ('000)	16.5	19.2	51.7	48.8

Overview

In the March quarter 2021, there were:

- 24 disputes, 8 less than from the previous quarter.
- 2,700 employees involved, an increase from 2,600 in the previous quarter.
- 19,200 working days lost, an increase from 16,500 in the previous quarter.

Year ended estimates:

- 79 disputes occurred, 51 less than in the previous year.
- 48,800 working days were lost, 6% less than the previous year.

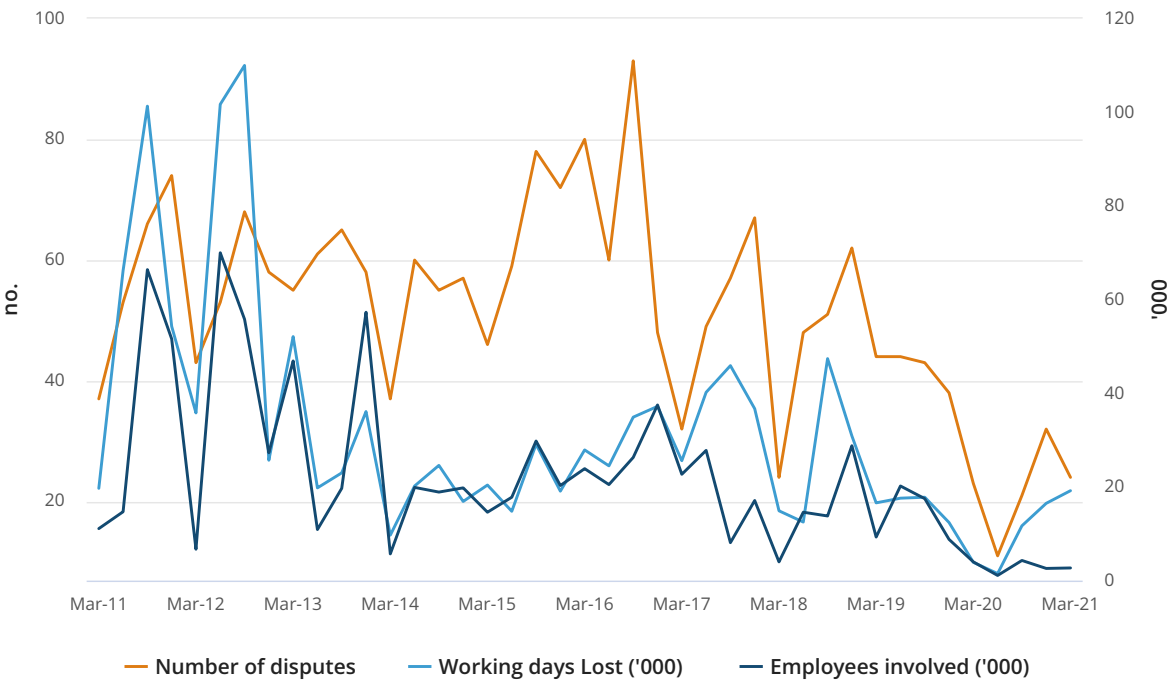
1 Industrial disputes which occurred during the quarter

Number of disputes		Employees involved			
	Commenced in period	Total	Newly involved	Total	Working days lost
	no.	no.	'000	'000	'000
March Quarter 2019	32	44	7.8	9.3	16.6
June Quarter 2019	34	44	18.8	20.2	17.6
September Quarter 2019	35	43	16.8	17.5	17.8
December Quarter 2019	34	38	8.3	8.8	12.4
March Quarter 2020	17	23	2.9	4.0	3.9
June Quarter 2020	8	11	0.9	1.1	1.5
September Quarter 2020	19	21	4.2	4.3	11.7
December Quarter 2020	27	32	2.2	2.6	16.5
March Quarter 2021	22	24	2.3	2.7	19.2

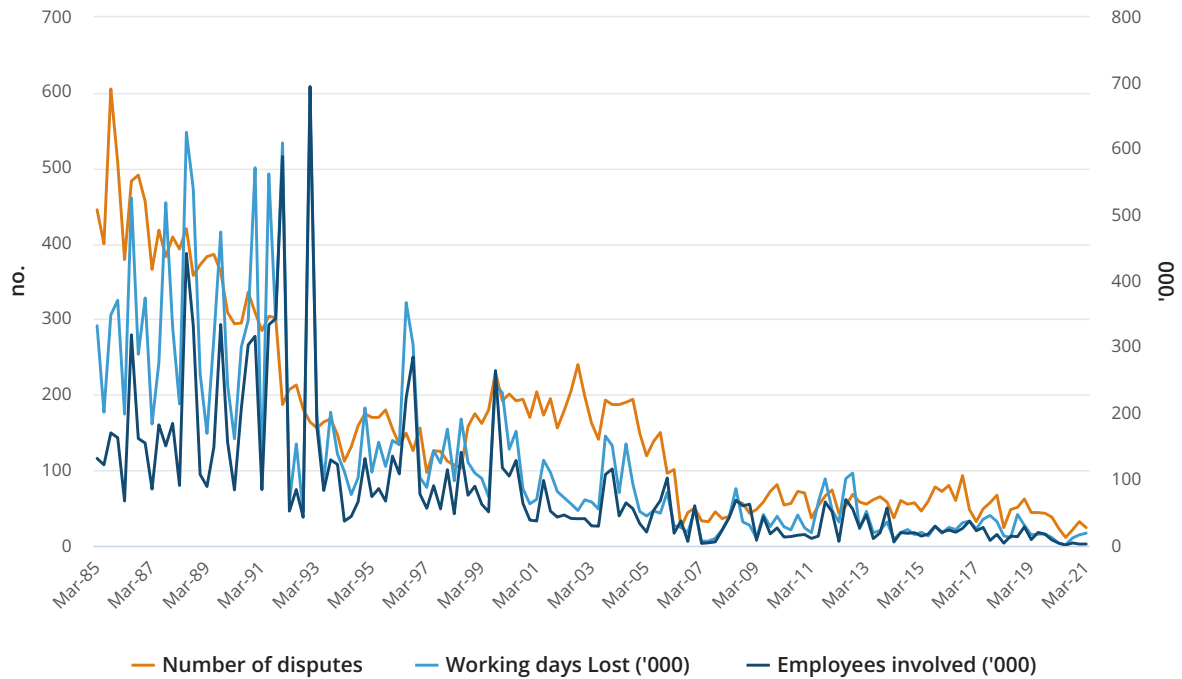
Long-term trends

The level of industrial disputation over recent years is considerably lower than in the 1980's and prior decades.

Industrial disputes in the last 10 years, Australia



Industrial disputes historical series, Australia



Industry

In the March quarter, disputes occurred in six industries. More than six in ten (68%) working days lost were in the Transport, postal and warehousing industry.

2 Industrial disputes which occurred during the quarter, industry

	December Quarter 2020		March Quarter 2021	
	Working days lost	Working days lost per thousand employees	Working days lost	Working days lost per thousand employees
	'000	no.	'000	no.
Mining				
Coal mining	-	-	1.7	34.6
Other mining	-	-	-	0.1
Manufacturing				
Metal product etc (a)	np	np	-	-
Other manufacturing	2.3	4.6	1.8	3.5
Construction	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.4
Transport, postal and warehousing	12.4	21.6	13.1	21.8
Education and training; Health care and social assistance	-	-	-	-
Other industries (a)	np	np	1.2	0.2
All industries	16.5	1.4	19.2	1.6

- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

np not available for publication but included in totals where applicable, unless otherwise indicated

a. See [Glossary \(https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/industrial-disputes-australia-methodology/sep-2020#glossary\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/industrial-disputes-australia-methodology/sep-2020#glossary) - Industry - for details of industries included.

States and territories

Disputes occurred in six states and territories in the March quarter, with more than eight in ten (82%) working days lost occurring in New South Wales.

3 Industrial disputes which occurred during the quarter, states and territories

	December Quarter 2020		March Quarter 2021	
	Working days lost	Working days lost per thousand employees	Working days lost	Working days lost per thousand employees
	'000	no.	'000	no.
NSW	12.4	3.3	15.8	4.3
Vic.	2.1	0.7	1.9	0.6
Qld	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.2
SA	0.5	0.6	np	np
WA	0.6	0.5	0.8	0.6
Tas.	np	np	-	-
NT	-	-	np	np
ACT	np	np	-	-
Australia	16.5	1.4	19.2	1.6

- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

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Cause of dispute

Most industrial disputes are Enterprise Bargaining (EB) related. Over the past 10 years, disputes over employment conditions have generally been the most prevalent.

EB related issues were the cause of 67% of disputes (20 of 30) which ended in the December quarter 2020.

4 Cause of disputes which ended during the quarter

September Quarter 2020				December Quarter 2020		
	Total Number of Disputes	Total Employees Involved	Working days Lost	Total Number of Disputes	Total Employees Involved	Working days Lost
	no.	'000	'000	no.	'000	'000
Enterprise Bargaining (EB) related						
Remuneration	4	0.3	0.4	8	0.3	1.4
Employment conditions (EB)	7	0.9	6.4	12	2.8	7.3
Other EB related	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-EB related						
Remuneration	-	-	-	1	-	-
Employment conditions	-	-	-	-	-	-
Health and safety	2	np	np	5	0.4	0.4
Job security	-	-	-	1	0.3	-
Managerial policy	1	0.1	-	1	np	np
Union issues	2	np	np	1	np	np
Other Non EB related	-	-	-	1	np	np
Total	16	1.8	7.5	30	4.3	9.7

- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

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Working days lost

Working days lost is a measure of the length of a dispute, relative to the number of employees involved.

Of the 30 disputes which ended in the December quarter, 12 lasted for a day or less. These disputes had:

- 1,300 total employees involved; and
- 800 working days lost.

5 Working days lost for disputes which ended during the quarter

September Quarter 2020				December Quarter 2020		
	Total Number of Disputes	Total Employees Involved	Working days Lost	Total Number of Disputes	Total Employees Involved	Working days Lost
	no.	'000	'000	no.	'000	'000
Up to and including 1 day	8	0.8	0.5	12	1.3	0.8
Over 1 day and up to including 2 days	1	np	np	6	1.0	1.3
Over 2 and less than 5 days	3	np	np	6	1.7	4.2
5 and less than 10 days	2	np	np	3	0.3	2.4
10 days and over	2	np	np	3	0.1	1.0
Total	16	1.8	7.5	30	4.3	9.7

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Reason work resumed

The reason work resumed relates to the last day of action taken. Resumption of work can occur without resolution to the issues that triggered the dispute.

There was a pre-determined return to work for 57% of disputes (17 of 30) which ended in the December quarter 2020.

6 Reason work resumed for disputes which ended during the quarter

	September Quarter 2020			December Quarter 2020		
	Total Number of Disputes	Total Employees Involved	Working days Lost	Total Number of Disputes	Total Employees Involved	Working days Lost
	no.	'000	'000	no.	'000	'000
Negotiation without intervention of a third party	2	np	np	5	0.4	2.3
State legislation	2	0.2	0.1	1	np	np
Federal legislation	2	np	np	1	0.6	0.8
Pre-determined return to work	7	np	np	17	2.5	5.9
Resumption without negotiation	3	0.3	0.3	6	np	np
Mediation	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other reasons	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	16	1.8	7.5	30	4.3	9.7

- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

np not available for publication but included in totals where applicable, unless otherwise indicated

Data downloads

Time Series Spreadsheets

[Download all \(434.09 KB\)](#)

Table 1: Industrial disputes which occurred during the period

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[86.5 KB]

Table 2a: Industrial disputes which occurred during the period, working days lost, industry

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[106 KB]

Table 2b: Industrial disputes which occurred during the period, working days lost per thousand employees, industry

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[103.5 KB]

Table 3a: Industrial disputes which occurred during the period, working days lost, states and territories

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[153 KB]

Table 3b: Industrial disputes which occurred during the period, working days lost per thousand employees, states and territories

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[142.5 KB]

Table 4a: Industrial disputes which ended during the period, cause of dispute

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[347 KB]

Table 4b: Industrial disputes which ended during the period, working days lost per employee involved

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[153 KB]

Table 4c: Industrial disputes which ended during the period, reason work resumed

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[265.5 KB]

Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6321.0.55.001.

Methodology

[Industrial Disputes, Australia methodology, March 2021](#)